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PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS EXPANDS TO CITY'S 10TH POLICE DISTRICT

**Pilsen, Little Village, Lawndale communities
added to existing target areas on west and south sides**

CHICAGO – The Project Safe Neighborhoods law enforcement partners announced today that the national anti-gun violence program – now entering its fourth year in Chicago – is expanding to the city's 10th Police District (Marquette), which encompasses the Little Village, Pilsen, and Lawndale neighborhoods on the city's near southwest side. Since the maturing Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program began here in 2002, focusing on the 11th and 15th police districts on the west side, those two districts have recorded substantially steeper declines in homicide rates than any other part of Chicago.

The city, state and federal PSN partners also announced the expansion to the 10th District of "parolee forums," a PSN component that communicates directly with felons convicted of gun crimes and was pioneered in Chicago. In addition, they unveiled a new advertising campaign and said they will be expanding a juvenile outreach component, "Hands Without Guns," to the 10th District. Adding the 10th District geographically connects all five PSN police districts – the initial 11th (Harrison) and 15th (Austin) districts, and the 7th (Englewood) and 9th (Deering) districts on the south side, which were added two years ago.

Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, announced the PSN expansion at a press conference together with Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley; Andrew L. Traver, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Philip J. Cline, Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department; Richard A. Devine, Cook County State's Attorney; Roger E. Walker, Jr., Director of the Illinois Department of Corrections; and Veronica Ballard, of the Cook County Adult Probation Department. The press conference was held at the Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy in the Little Village neighborhood in the 10th District.

The officials displayed a new media campaign that began this month, featuring more than 130 billboards and more than 900 posters on buses, trains and bus shelters. This is PSN's third advertising launch to spread the message in PSN target districts. The campaign's slogan is: "Federal Time for Gun Crime," with a message directed at convicted felons. The advertising is located in the five PSN districts, including for the first time in the 10th District, where some of the PSN billboards are in Spanish.

The juvenile outreach program, "Hands Without Guns," which began a year ago in the other districts, will be expanded to schools in the 10th District. PSN has partnered with the Chicago Public Schools, Uhlich Children's Homes, and Schwab Rehabilitation Center to provide this eight-week program to all junior high and high school students to persuade them not to possess guns. The program's classes focus on the issues that might lead a child to pick up a gun. For first-time juvenile offenders, PSN soon will begin providing a modified "Hands Without Guns" program at CPD's Juvenile Intervention and Support Center, which will be located in the 10th District. If a juvenile successfully completes the program, he or she will not be referred to Juvenile Court. And for juveniles on parole for a juvenile conviction, sessions similar to the regular parolee forums will begin this summer.

“PSN is saving lives in Chicago, but on the streets of the 10th District, where hard-working people live, raise families and try to live a normal life, there is still far too much gunfire,” Mr. Fitzgerald said. “Our message is simple: if you pick up a gun, you are facing serious federal prison time. Hundreds of convicted felons and gang members in other parts of the city are getting this message; sometimes they are making the right choice and putting down their guns, and other times it’s only after they are facing a lengthy federal prison term. In 2005, we are bringing this message to youth, to offenders on probation and to the residents of the 10th district. We look forward to working closely with our state and local partners to continue our efforts to change behavior in ways that save lives.”

PSN is a partnership among federal and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors, and parole and probation officials to reduce gun violence. The program’s goal is to decrease the number of felons carrying guns, through both enforcement and deterrence strategies. PSN attempts to obtain the longest sentences for the worst offenders, and to use these cases as part of a deterrence strategy to change individuals’ behavior to make gun crimes less prevalent.

Every arrest of a convicted felon charged with gun possession in Cook County is reviewed for possible federal prosecution, which often carries steep federal prison sentences served outside Illinois. Since 2002, far more of these cases are prosecuted federally, with a priority on cases from PSN’s target districts. Federal and state prosecutors will now begin prioritizing cases from the 10th District.

In an effort to deter felons from picking up a gun in the first place, PSN tells felons about the likelihood of steep federal prison sentences if they are caught with a gun. One way this is done is through PSN’s parolee forums. About twice a month, approximately 30 state parolees with prior gun convictions who were paroled to the PSN districts meet with representatives from both law enforcement and the community. They receive two messages: they will serve long

federal prison terms far from home if they are caught carrying a gun, and there are opportunities available to them for job training, job placement, education, and counseling.

The PSN partners are inviting businesses in the private sector to join their community-based efforts. Individuals or companies able to provide ex-offender employment opportunities are encouraged to contact Donna Gerber, director of employment services at the Safer Foundation, either by phone at (312) 913-5440, or e-mail at donna.gerber@saferfoundation.org

Parolee forums began in the 11th and 15th districts in January 2003. Two university researchers studying PSN's efforts in Chicago recently concluded that the parolees who attended the parolee forums are far less likely to commit a new gun crime than similarly-situated parolees who do not attend the forums.

A few months ago, similar forums were started for county probationers in the 11th and 15th districts, and these probationer forums will soon be available in the 7th, 9th and 10th districts. The parolee forums are run by the Illinois Department of Corrections, and the probationer forums are run by the Cook County Adult Probation Department.

Mayor Daley said: "This is good news, not just for law-abiding residents of the Marquette District, but for every resident of the City of Chicago because when we get guns off the street and away from gangbangers and armed career criminals all our neighborhoods are safer."

Mr. Traver of ATF said: "Project Safe Neighborhoods is much more than a simple process where local gun arrests are referred to federal court for prosecution. PSN is a multi-faceted approach to reducing violent gun crime, and it encompasses virtually everything that ATF does in regard to firearms enforcement. We do not adhere to a "top down" or "bottom up" investigative paradigm, but rather attack illegal gun crime from every available angle."

Superintendent Cline said: “Project Safe Neighborhoods works because it attacks the gun violence on two fronts – enforcement and deterrence. We’re prosecuting gun crimes more aggressively and holding repeat gun offenders accountable. We’re also backing up enforcement with genuine efforts to prevent offenders from even reaching for a gun in the first place.”

Mr. Devine added: “We are heartened to bring this highly successful cooperative effort to this community. We are confident that the community will benefit in the same way that the west and south sides have already from Safe Neighborhoods, with fewer guns and fewer gunmen and fewer senseless deaths.”

Mr. Walker of IDOC said: “The Illinois Department of Corrections is committed to the success and the expansion of Project Safe Neighborhoods into the 10th District. The agency has been a proud partner of this program and we look forward to its continued success.”

Research results in 11th and 15th districts:

When PSN began in May 2002, the homicide rate (murders per 100,000 people) in the 11th District was 85, and in the 15th District was 62.

Since then, the 11th District rate has been cut to 30, almost two-thirds lower, and the 15th District rate has been cut by more than half to 29. (The rate for Chicago during this time fell from 22 to 15.) In absolute terms, the number of murders in the two districts declined from a total of 115 in 2002 to 46 in 2004. Roughly 80 percent of the city’s murders annually are committed with guns.

In the 10th District, the homicide rate in 2004 was 29. In prior years, the rate was 36 (2003), 29 (2002), and 35 (2001).

The researchers, Prof. Tracey Meares, of the University of Chicago Law School, and Andrew Papachristos, a doctoral candidate in the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago, both of whom are also affiliated with the Center for Crime, Community and Law at

Columbia University Law School, have studied PSN in Chicago since its inception, including firearm recidivism figures for parolees in the target districts. Of more than 700 parolees who have attended a forum in the 11th and 15th districts, only 7 were subsequently convicted of a gun crime, equal to 1 percent of the parolees who attended a forum. In contrast, the percentage of similarly-situated parolees who were convicted of gun crimes during the same time period and did not attend a forum was 2.6 percent in all the PSN target districts (31 out of 1,182 in the 11th / 15th districts, and 52 out of 1,986 in the 7th / 9th districts). In the 7th and 9th districts, none of the 158 parolees who attended a forum were later convicted of a gun crime, but researchers say it is too early to draw definitive conclusions about recidivism statistics for forums in these districts.

The researchers also concluded that since the parolee forums began in the 11th and 15th districts, the homicide rate in the two districts has consistently fallen, and has fallen more sharply there than in the City as a whole and more than in the City's median districts.

In addition to PSN, the Chicago Police have launched a number of new anti-violent crime initiatives, including blue-light surveillance cameras and targeted response teams. The large drop in the homicide rate in the 11th and 15th districts is likely the result of a combination of PSN and other initiatives.

PSN expansion to 7th and 9th districts

In May 2003, PSN expanded to the 7th and 9th districts, prioritizing federal prosecutions from them, creating a second PSN gun team, and launching the first advertising campaign. The parolee forums started in the 7th and 9th districts last August, after PSN began using part of its Department of Justice grant to fund a PSN parolee forum coordinator in the state corrections department, making it possible to operate a larger number of parolee forums.

The homicide rate in the 9th District was cut almost in half from 2003 to 2004, falling from 27 to 14. In the 7th District, the homicide rate fell from 55 to 50 during the same period.

Overall, the number of murders in the two districts fell from 91 in 2003 to 66 in 2004. (In 2002, there were 102 murders in the two districts, and in 2001 there were 93.)

PSN Programs – Enforcement

PSN's core enforcement component is the federal prosecution of cases in which Chicago Police Officers arrest felons who are in possession of guns. Conviction on federal charges frequently yields a significantly higher sentence than a state conviction for this offense. Since PSN began, an Assistant U.S. Attorney and an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney meet regularly to review all Cook County gun possession arrests to determine which cases merit federal prosecution. All federal defendants must serve 85 percent of their sentence, often in prisons in other states, and there is no parole.

The number of PSN-type gun cases that the U.S. Attorney's Office prosecutes has nearly quadrupled over the last three years. More cases have been prosecuted from the 11th and 15th districts than any other district. The average sentence in PSN cases from the targeted districts has been approximately 10 years and some defendants have been sentenced as high as 30 years.

A second enforcement strategy was creating a PSN Gun Team, originally operating in the 11th and 15th districts. When PSN expanded to the 7th and 9th districts, a second PSN Gun Team was created and, later, the Chicago Police Department created Gun Teams in each of the city's five Police Areas. The Gun Teams work to catch convicted felons with guns, to gather intelligence about gun suppliers, and to investigate gun traffickers who sell guns to street gang members and convicted felons. The Gun Teams are made up of Chicago Police Officers, with coordinated assistance from ATF agents.

One of the PSN partners is the Drug and Gang Housing Enforcement Section of the City of Chicago's Law Department. A designated city attorney works with the Gun Teams to

investigate properties involved in gun crimes, and take action against owners who encourage or permit gun crimes to occur on their properties.

A third enforcement strategy, announced in February 2004, was the targeting of gun traffickers, particularly “straw purchasers” (individuals who buy guns in their own names for felons who are barred from buying guns) and out-of-state traffickers.

PSN Programs – Deterrence

PSN’s deterrence strategies include the parolee forums and, since March, similar forums held for probationers in the PSN districts. Through the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Cook County Adult Probation Department, PSN letters are also given to every Illinois prisoner released onto parole and every county probationer, warning them of the strict federal penalties for being a felon in possession of a gun.

The advertising component of PSN’s deterrence strategy has included billboards, bus posters, and radio ads. In a recent recorded conversation, an inmate at the federal jail in downtown Chicago who had been charged with a gun crime under PSN spoke to an individual who was on parole and had received one of the PSN parolee letters from IDOC. The inmate explained that anyone who was a convicted felon could get prosecuted federally under PSN, even if he was not on parole, and explained that the PSN radio ads made this clear:

“Listen to the radio ... they always sayin’ it on the radio. They’ll tell you in a minute: ‘Next felony you catch, we feel sorry for your family because you won’t see your family again.’ It’s all on the radio. These people ain’t playin’....”

Following this exchange, the parolee said that he was working at his job, and the inmate said, “You got to.”

For more information about PSN on the Internet, see www.psnchicago.org and www.psn.gov

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